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DE RUEHLM #0470/01 1191146
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9885
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1139
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 0222
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3788
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1615
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 8609
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 6845
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4931
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2973
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 4892
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3998
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9248
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 6558
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 1099
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3471
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER), SCA/INS AND PRM
STATE ALSO PASS USAID
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)
ATHENS FOR PCARTER
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 63

REF: A) Colombo 469 B) Colombo 464 C) Colombo 459 D) Colombo 456 E)
Colombo 454 F) Colombo 448 G) Colombo 435 H) Colombo 432 I) Colombo
425 J) Colombo 418 K) Colombo 414 and previous

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Despite the Government's April 27 promise to end use of heavy weapons in the conflict, post continues to receive reports from multiple reliable Embassy sources with access to first-hand information of firing causing civilian deaths and injuries in the Government-designated "safe zone." Some indicated that since April 28 much of this may have been "indirect fire" from battlefield mortars, which would be consistent with President Rajapaksa's April 27 announcement, but would still cause numerous casualties if used in proximity to civilian concentrations. Charge expressed grave concern in an April 29 meeting with Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa. The British Foreign Minister and French Foreign Secretary arrived in Sri Lanka on April 29 and will travel to IDP sites in Vavuniya. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports over 160,000 civilians are now in camps in Government-controlled territory. END SUMMARY.

"END TO COMBAT OPERATIONS"?

12. (SBU) While the Government of Sri Lanka declared the end of major combat operations on April 27, reports of firing into the Government-declared "safe zone" have continued. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has local staff within the conflict zone, confirmed ongoing "intense combat," causing numerous

civilian casualties with shrapnel wounds from mortar fire. According to one source, some of the mortars may have been fired from offshore boats. The ICRC boat which evacuated some of the injured on April 28 observed some of the firing directly. (ICRC abides by a policy of neutrality under which they cannot comment on the source of fire.) Post is still seeking confirmation of one report of an aerial bombing in the "safe zone" on April 28.

CHARGE EXPRESSES CONCERN

13. (SBU) Charge met with Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa on April 29 to discuss a range of issues. Charge noted grave concern at the multiple reliable reports of continued shelling and again urged the Government to adhere to its April 27 promise. Rajapaksa, who had just returned to the Island hours earlier from the United States, asserted that no aerial bombing was being conducted and agreed that civilian casualties must be avoided.

ARRIVAL OF BRITISH AND FRENCH DELEGATION

14. (SBU) British Foreign Secretary David Miliband and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner arrived in Sri Lanka on April 29 for a one-day visit. They were scheduled to meet with the President, government officials, opposition leaders, and the UN and visit IDP transit sites in Vavuniya. They were flown to Embilipitiya in the South to meet with the President. Post will provide a readout of the visit tomorrow.

15. (U) Local and international press closely covered the

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Government's decision not to grant a visa to Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, who intended to join the British and French delegation. Sri Lankan Government officials cite the strain on resources caused by multiple high-level visitors to sites in the North, and insist he was not actually denied a visa, just asked to postpone the trip to a more convenient time. BBC and other press outlets played coverage of Bildt exiting an EU Foreign Ministers' meeting in Luxembourg and commenting on the Sri Lankan Government's "exceedingly strange behavior."

UPDATE ON HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES

16. (U) According the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 161,765 persons have crossed into Government-controlled territory since late October, including over 1,900 still receiving treatment in hospitals. UNICEF reports the Government has just released water bowzers and pipes held by authorities at the Medawachchiya checkpoint. (Note: All aid materials destined for the Vavuniya IDP camps must pass through this Government checkpoint. End note.)

RETURNS TO BEGIN IN THE NORTH

17. (SBU) Press accounts report the first returns of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their home villages in the Northern Province will begin on April 30. Basil Rajapaksa told Charge that an initial 125 displaced families will be returned in the Musalli area of Mannar District on April 30 and another 600 families will follow on May 2. The Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) notes that returns to this area were delayed by the need for demining efforts. (Comment: Most of the villages were eventually found to have no mine contamination, but there were repeated delays in getting MoD clearance for the mine surveys to be done. Nevertheless, these returns are a small but welcome step forward. UNHCR separately reported that several thousand civilians recently trapped in the conflict zone in Mullaitivu were originally displaced from Mannar Province over a year ago and successively pushed northward by combat. End comment.)

PROTESTS AT US, UK EMBASSIES

18. (SBU) Two groups of pro-Government Buddhist monks attempted to protest in front of the U.S. Embassy and British High Commission on April 29. Sri Lankan authorities blocked the U.S. Embassy-bound group approximately two blocks away, and permitted several leaders to continue on to the Embassy compound to deliver a petition. The letter, addressed to President Obama from a small nationalist group allied with the extremist JHU party and the National Patriotic Movement (NPM), decries abuses perpetrated by the LTTE and protests the international community's interference in Sri Lanka's internal affairs. According to RSO sources, some of the monks were actually prominent businessmen anxious to show their support for the President's positions. The demonstration in front of the UK High Commission was much longer and persisted into the afternoon.

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19. (SBU) Separately, "wanted" posters have appeared in Colombo depicting photos of British Foreign Minister Miliband, Secretary of State Clinton, and Norwegian International Development Minister Eric Sondheim. The posters accuse the three of aiding and abetting the LTTE.

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